



## CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS

Dear Members

What amazing walking weather we have had this summer. Our walks have been well supported even on the hottest of days!

Your committee has been busy over the last few months working hard to comply with the new data protection rules. *Ramblers Cymru* has given us detailed guidance on this matter, and a dedicated team of our committee members spent time analysing its impact on what we do as a group. Mostly, we can comply with the new guidelines, but we have taken the trouble to feedback where instructions are ambiguous or, in some cases, over-zealous in our opinion! It is important that those of you who have not yet given your permission to be contacted by the Group follow the guidance given in this newsletter by our Membership Secretary. If you do not give your permission to be contacted, the only correspondence you will receive from the Group will be the walks programmes and newsletters.

We are fortunate to have such a hard-working committee, and my thanks as ever go out to them for the dedication and effort they put in behind the scenes to ensure the smooth running of the Group.

I feel fortunate to be a member of an organisation such as *The Ramblers* that strives at all levels to protect Rights of Way over this beautiful land of ours. No other country in the world has such open access, so it should never be taken for granted. I do get somewhat frustrated at times when other walking groups fail to acknowledge that without *The Ramblers*, many of the privileges they enjoy would not exist.

Back to home, I am pleased to report that newer members have stepped up as walk leaders: Thank you and well done. Committee help is always needed, and I'm pleased to report a new volunteer for that too. We would be delighted to have more of our younger members step up to support our long-standing volunteers. As our Walks Officer always says, there is plenty of help and support freely available to anyone who wants to become more involved.

The social side of our Group is important, but the lack of takers for organised activities in the recent past has deterred Committee members from planning events as they have previously spent a lot of time and effort arranging activities only to find themselves having to cancel due to lack of support. My call for members' suggestions for social activities has gone unanswered, so at the moment, the Committee is at a loss to know how to improve matters. WE NEED YOUR INPUT! However, our Christmas lunch is booked and details and a booking form are enclosed with this newsletter. It is an important social event in our calendar, so I look forward to a good turnout.

Our Walks Officer has been working hard putting together our next Walks Programme with help from our Publicity Officer and Membership Secretary on the publishing side. My thanks to those who have agreed to lead walks. We need you so that we can continue to enjoy walking in this wonderful area of ours in the company of people who have become friends.

Happy Rambling.

**Jackie Colclough**

## WALKS OFFICER'S REPORT

Same old, same old! Another season's programme has been published, and thanks again to the walk leaders who have stepped up to the mark again. As you may see if you look closely, there are a few gaps this time as there are not enough leaders coming forward to support a full programme. Please give it a try and give back a little to our group. Leading a walk really isn't difficult, and we will provide support and help to get you up to speed and through your first few walks. Plus, you will get a buzz from the thanks and appreciation you receive from other walkers.

Looking back, we had a wonderful summer. Clean boots, light rucksacks, and shorts made a comeback. Could not be better really, and I am sure you will want to thank the walk leaders who did a sterling job. Let's hope the autumn is an Indian summer and the winter is crisp and dry.

The new programme sees a small change that I want to explain. I have not included the map references of the start points of walks or any descriptions of where we are parking. This is so that we do not identify on *The Ramblers Walks*

Finder website, which is open to the public, exactly where our cars will be left. Obviously, we want to minimise the risk of our cars being broken into in remote places. However, as we always do, we request that if you want to go directly to the start of the walk you contact the walk leader concerned. I hope this does not cause any problems as most of us usually meet up at Chepstow Leisure Centre or Raglan School.

Finally, a plea to walk leaders to put in claims for receiving walks and other legitimate expenses. We have funds available, and I want to encourage you to keep leading walks. I will champion any claim that you wish to make and support you in getting maps, map holders, and anything else that directly supports your walk leader activities. The claim form is on the LWR website and can be downloaded and printed off. Needless to say, I have claimed for my petrol and maps for last season.

Good walking and keep safe.

**Steve Hunt**

## PATH-CARE TEAM

No path-care work has been carried out by the Group in the past six months. Members of the former path care team that have done this work for the past 10 years or more have fallen prey to old age, infirmity, or the Grim Reaper or have moved away.

Path care is a vital element of the functions of a healthy Ramblers group and although in the past, the LWR were very active in this regard, sadly this is no longer the case.

The responsibility for maintaining public footpaths lies with the local authority. However, in Monmouthshire, as in many other counties, cutbacks in funding have forced Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) to prioritise its workload. MCC has therefore focused on looking after the "flagship" routes—Offa's Dyke, the Coast Path, the Wye Valley walk, etc.; as a consequence,

"lesser paths" (or what MCC considers to be lesser paths) are being neglected. Traditionally, we have filled this gap with our path-care team, but, as I have said, this team is no longer fit to continue.

We urgently need someone who could take on the role of organising path care for the next few years. Ideally, we need a team of 3 to 4 people. The work mainly involves the clearance of overgrowth and undergrowth on paths using shears, loppers, and slashers, all of which we have.

Advice on all aspects of the role is readily available, so please, if you think you would like to give it a go, get in touch. It can be a lot of fun as well as being a very useful job keeping the paths we all hope to use open.

**Allen Thomas**

# MEMBERSHIP AND DATA PROTECTION

Members' personal data are held by *The Ramblers* in a central database and updated monthly to groups. This means that the rules concerning data protection are applied to *The Ramblers* as a large organisation and not to individual groups, which might otherwise have been able to ignore them.

The database contains three columns labelled "E-mails", "Post", and "Telephone", respectively. Against each member's name, either "Yes" or "No" is entered in each column, indicating whether that member is considered to have agreed to receive communications from *The Ramblers* through this method. Under the new legislation, a "Yes" entry can only be inputted into the database if the member has communicated to *The Ramblers* that this is their choice. In the absence of such communication, the default entry must be "No".

While there is still a lack of clarity in some areas, this restriction is said to include communications from Area and Group. Programmes and newsletters can be sent to all members by post, regardless of their registered choice, because these are seen as being essential to their membership. However, we are told that this does not apply to e-mailing these essential documents. Day-to-day messages can only be sent by any of the three means if the member has indicated

their agreement to receive such messages. At present, approximately half of LWR members with email addresses have "No" against their names in the "E-mail" column of the database and thus cannot legally receive e-mails from the Lower Wye Ramblers group.

If you wish to ensure that your choices are up to date, you must make a positive indication to *The Ramblers*. You can do this in the following ways:

**By post:** Membership Dept., The Ramblers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Camelford House, 87-90 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TW.

**By e-mail:** [membership@ramblers.zendesk.com](mailto:membership@ramblers.zendesk.com)

**On-line** at [www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk): If you have not already registered on this site, you will need to do so; log in and go to My Account/Update Profile/Contact Preferences and tick the relevant boxes.

In all cases, you will need to give your name(s), address, and membership number, which appears on your membership card.

Ensuring that you have "Yes" entered against your name in the appropriate columns will make my job so much easier and will ensure that you receive the maximum amount of information from the LWR group.

## Bill Price

## LOWER WYE RAMBLES BOOKLET: NEW SALES DIRECTOR NEED

Anne Tyler, who has been our Sales Director for the *Lower Wye Rambles* booklet, is shortly moving out of area to Alnwick, and so we are now seeking a volunteer to take over this position from her. The job can be done from home and involves keeping tabs on our sales and submitting invoices to those outlets that sell the books and responding to requests to post books to purchasers from afar; Anne will be happy to advise on the details.

Anne has done a splendid job for some years, and it is sad to see her leave us for the green pastures of Northumberland and the Cheviot Hills. On behalf of all LWR members, the Committee wishes Anne well for the future and thanks her for the support she has given to the Group over many years, not just with regard to the booklet sales but also as a walk leader.

**Allen Thomas**

## SOCIAL SCENE

Our Christmas lunch this year will be held at The Huntsman Hotel in Shirenewton on 8 December (12.30 for 1 p.m.). Menus and the booking form are enclosed with this newsletter. We hope to see you there.

As ever, we would welcome ideas for other social events. Please let me know if you have any ideas. You can contact me by telephone (07760364462) or via Jackie's email (jaccolclough@gmail.com).

**John Cottrell**

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**4 NOVEMBER 2018: GWENT AREA AGM AND WALK, HOSTED BY NORTH GWENT.** Walk starts at 10 am. Lunch at 1 pm for those staying for AGM. AGM starts at 2 pm.

**8 DECEMBER 2018: CHRISTMAS LUNCH, THE HUNTSMAN, SHIRENEWTON, 12.30 for 1 p.m.**

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